

compliments of E. M. Seabrook

2

EMANCIPATION

IN THE

BRITISH WEST INDIA ISLANDS.

BEING AN ARTICLE FROM

THE SO. QUARTERLY REVIEW FOR APRIL, 1853.



CHARLESTON:

STEAM POWER PRESS OF WALKER AND JAMES.

1853.

345

EMANCIPATION

IN THE

BRITISH WEST INDIA ISLANDS.

FROM THE SOUTHERN QUARTERLY REVIEW FOR APRIL, 1863.

EMANCIPATION IN BRITISH WEST INDIES.

1. *Claims and Resources of the West Indian Colonies.* A Letter to the Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., late Secretary of State for the Colonies. By the Hon. E. STANLEY, M.P. London : 1850.
2. *Farther Facts connected with the West Indies.* A second Letter to the Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., late Secretary of State for the Colonies. By LORD STANLEY, M.P. London : 1851.
3. *Jamaica in 1850; or, The Effects of Fifteen Years of Freedom on a Slave Colony.* By JOHN BIGELOW. New-York and London : 1851.

WE have placed these works at the head of this article, not with the intention of examining their merits as literary compositions, but for the purpose of adducing the evidence which they afford in relation to the subject of African slavery, and its abolition by the Southern States.

The discussion of this subject, while it has engaged the attention of the civilized world, has grown to be the absorbing topic of interest in our own country. More than once has the government been shaken to its foundations by its agitation, and the domestic peace and harmony of the Confederacy jeopardized.

In the place of that love and harmony which once pervaded our land, and made us truly one people, it has sown broadcast throughout the two great sections of the country—the North and the South—the seeds of alienation, distrust and apprehension. Abolitionism has spared no means to develop and perpetuate itself. Not content with entering into the arena of politics, and ascending the pulpit, it has also invaded our literature. Philosophy, poetry and fiction, are each in turn used and abused by it in the accomplishment of its purposes.

In this condition of things, it becomes the South to bring to the consideration of this subject, the calmest reason and the most cautious investigation. She cannot be too vigilant, and she must

not be unwise ; for upon the solution of this question depends her destiny. It is her duty as well as her interest, to examine well for herself, and in making up her judgment, with due deference to the opinion of the world, to profit by the light of experience, and to determine for herself on her own understanding of the question.

Fortunately for her, she is not left to grope on her way darkly. The institution with which her destiny is bound up, and which she is seeking to maintain, is as old as the first records of man, and has been united in a greater or less degree with every political fabric his wisdom has reared.

The experiment of emancipating the negro, has been fully and fairly tried for her. Great Britain has done for her what she could not have well done for herself. And we propose, in this article, to examine the facts of that experiment, and to mark its results ; and for this purpose we shall adduce in detail, the evidence afforded by the writers whose works are placed at its head—writers of unquestionable intelligence and ability, and all of whose prejudices were certainly on the side of freedom. We do this, because, while the failure of this whole scheme of philanthropy is generally admitted, ingenious apologies have been made to account for it, and the detailed operations and effects of the Act of Emancipation are within the reach of but few.

The Act of Emancipation passed the British Parliament in 1833, and enacted, that on the 1st of August, 1834, slavery was to cease throughout the British dominions ; and that the then existing slaves were to become apprenticed labourers, the term of their apprenticeship partly ceasing on the 1st of August, 1838, and partly on the 1st of August, 1840, when the black and coloured population were to become absolutely free. A sum of twenty millions of pounds was to be distributed to the planters, in certain proportions, and according to certain conditions, as a compensation for the loss of their slaves.

Immediately upon its passage, this Act was heralded to the world as the great event of the times, and the great measure of the age. The British nation signalized itself in the eyes of the world by its self-gratulations and boastings upon the passage of this Act, as illustrating its wisdom, justice and humanity. Brilliant results were anticipated for it ; and a new era in the prosperity of her

West India Islands, it was thought, was about to be inaugurated. It was imagined that in its practical operation, it would be a sort of panacea, which would work a cure for all the imperfections of the African race, and restore it to that condition of equality which (according to our modern philanthropists) it must have enjoyed along with the other children of Adam, at some unknown period of time since the beginning of all things. Its evil tendencies—its proverbial indolence—its lack of enterprise—its habitual carelessness—its ignorance—all its known characteristics were to be washed out, and its nature renewed by this baptism at the fountain of freedom. But, alas! for the short-sightedness of human wisdom! It does not always happen that those measures which were intended to be measures of wisdom and humanity, turn out to be so in their practical operation. Those bright anticipations of the social improvement and material prosperity of her West India Islands, must now give place to the melancholy realities of their degradation and ruin caused by this act of her folly; and England must feel painfully conscious that her effort was wasted upon the African race, and her self-congratulations bestowed too soon. The truth is, the measure has utterly failed of all its purposes, and remains but another striking monument of the weakness of human wisdom.

At first, it was said, time only was wanted to develop the happy influences it must sooner or later exert. What was asked has been granted. Eighteen years have passed since the passage of the Act of Parliament, and we may now inquire, what is the present condition of her West India Islands, as compared with their condition prior to the Act of 1833? and with the light of this investigation, determine what were the effects of that Act upon the material and moral elements of their prosperity.

The works of Mr. Bigelow and Lord Stanley give a full and faithful picture of the present prostrate and ruinous condition of these islands; and they were written under circumstances which entitle them to credit in their statement of facts.

Mr. Bigelow was an eye-witness of most of the facts which he details, having made a visit to Jamaica, and spent sufficient time there to be well informed. He is an abolitionist, and it is natural to suppose, would be inclined to give the most favourable accounts

of the results of the experiment of freedom. We must say for his work, that it is written with intelligence and candor, and that his facts, with a few exceptions, are unimpeachable, although we differ from him *toto caelo* in the inferences he deduces from them.

Lord Stanley is, or was, a member of Parliament, who also made a visit to these islands for the purpose of learning their condition ; and his letters in reference to them are able, full and candid. We have, then, in these gentlemen, two able, well-informed and credible witnesses, whose testimony is before us.

Mr. Bigelow thus describes the present condition of Jamaica :

" It is difficult to exaggerate, and yet more difficult to define, the poverty and industrial prostration of Jamaica. The natural wealth and spontaneous productiveness of the island are so great, that no one can starve, and yet it seems as if the faculty of accumulation were suspended. All the productive power of the soil is running to waste ; the finest land in the world may be had at any price, and almost for the asking ; labour receives no compensation, and the product of labour does not seem to know the way to market. Families accustomed to wealth and every luxury, have witnessed the decline of their incomes, until now, with undiminished estates, they find themselves wrestling with poverty for the commonest necessities of life. * * * * *

" Since the year 1833, when the British Slave Emancipation Act was passed, the real estate of the island has been rapidly depreciating in value, and its productiveness has been steadily diminishing to its present comparatively ruinous standard. * * *

" Since 1832, out of the six hundred and fifty-three sugar estates then in cultivation, more than one hundred and fifty have been abandoned, and the works broken up. This has thrown out of cultivation over 200,000 acres of rich land, which, in 1832, gave employment to about 30,000 labourers, and yielded over 15,000 hogsheads of sugar, and over 6,000 puncheons of rum.

" During the same period, over 500 coffee plantations have been abandoned, and their works broken up. This threw out of cultivation over 200,000 acres more of land, which, in 1832, required the labour of over 30,000 men.

" From an official return of the exports from the island now lying before me, I am enabled to compare the surplus production of its great staples in the three years previous to the Emancipation Act, with the exports for the three years preceding the month of October, 1848. They contrast as follows :

Year when ex- ported.	Sugar lhds	Rum punc'ns.	Mol's. casks.	Ginger pounds.	Pimento pounds.	Coffee lbs.
1830, . . .	100,205	35,025	154	1,748,800	5,560,620	22,256,950
1831, . . .	94,881	36,411	230	1,614,640	3,172,320	14,055,350
1832, . . .	98,686	33,685	799	2,855,560	4,024,800	19,815,010
	298,772	105,121	1,188	5,719,000	12,757,740	56,126,810
1846, . . .	36,223	14,395	76	1,462,600	2,997,060	6,047,150
1847, . . .	48,554	18,077	22	1,324,480	2,800,140	6,421,122
1848, . . .	42,212	20,194	2	320,340	5,231,908	5,634,941
	126,989	52,666	100	3,106,820	11,029,108	18,158,218
Aggregate diminu- tion, . . .	166,783	52,455	1,083	2,802,180	1,628,532	38,973,097

" By this contrast it appears, that during the last three years the island has exported less than half the sugar, rum or ginger ; less than one-third the coffee ; less than one-tenth the molasses ; and nearly two millions of pounds less of pimento, than during the three years which preceded the Emancipation Act. * * *

" The political economist need not be told that such a falling off from the income of the island, must have been attended with a corresponding depreciation in the value of real estate ; but no one unacquainted with the fertility and beauty, and former productiveness of Jamaica, can realize the extent of that depreciation. I will give you a few illustrations which can be relied upon.

" The Spring Valley estate in the parish of St. Mary's, embracing 1,244 acres, had been sold once for £18,000 sterling. In 1842, it was abandoned, and in 1845, the freehold, including works, machinery, plantation utensils, and water power, was sold for £1,000.

" The Tremoles estate, of 1,450 acres, once worth £68,265 sterling, has been since sold for £8,400, and would not now bring half that sum.

" The overseer of Friendship Valley estate used to receive a salary of £120 per annum for his services ; he has been offered the whole estate within three years for £120.

" Fair Prospect estate, which used to yield five hundred hogsheads of sugar, and was valued at £40,000, was sold in 1841 for £4,000, and now would not bring anything like that sum.

" Provision lands about the Rio Grande river, which had never been opened, and which were exceedingly productive, have been sold for one dollar per acre, and I was informed by the Governor, Sir Charles Grey, that he knew of ten thousand acres of land, lying all together, which could now be bought for £1,000, or for about fifty cents an acre ; indeed, what is yet more extraordinary, a cultivated sugar estate of 2000 acres was sold only this last April for £600.

"I might multiply facts of this kind without number, but it is sufficient to say, that prepared land, as fine as any under cultivation on the island, may be readily bought in unlimited quantities for five dollars an acre, while land far more productive than any in England, may be readily had for from fifty cents to a dollar.

"That the misfortunes of Jamaica may not be attributed exclusively to local causes, it is proper that I should state that the other British West India islands have all been visited by equally serious, if not the same prostrating influences, and all consider themselves ruined and helpless.

"By returns recently made to the British House of Commons, it appears that, comparing the imports from British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad, during the years 1831 to 1838, with the years 1844 to 1848, the production of sugar has fallen off 3,130,000 cwt., molasses 505,133 cwt., rum 3,324,627 galls., coffee 52,661,350 lbs., and the production of cotton has entirely ceased.

"In 1838 there were two hundred and fifty-eight estates in Demarara and Essequibo in profitable cultivation; of these, seventy-one have been abandoned and one hundred and eleven sold under execution."

On page 63, he says :

"It is easy to see that such a general depreciation in the price of productive property anywhere, must leave poverty and ruin on its path, but adequately to realize the financial reverses of this gem of the ocean, it is necessary to appreciate its exceeding fertility and unequalled natural resources. I will briefly allude to some of the most prominent indications of both."

After giving a description of the richness, natural fertility and resources of the island, he says :

"Such are some of the natural resources of this dilapidated and poverty-stricken country. Capable as it is of producing almost everything, and actually producing nothing which might not become a staple with a proper application of capital and skill, its inhabitants are miserably poor, and daily sinking deeper and deeper into the utter helplessness of abject want.

Magnas inter opes inops.

"Shipping has deserted her ports; her magnificent plantations of sugar and coffee are running to weeds; her private dwellings are falling to decay; the comforts and luxuries which belong to industrial prosperity have been cut off, one by one, from her inhabitants; and the day, I think, is at hand when there will be none left to represent the wealth, intelligence and hospitality for which the Jamaica planter was once so distinguished."

Of Kingston, which is the principal port of the island, he says :

" In the busiest parts of the city, and on every block, may be seen vacant lots, on which are crumbling the foundation walls of houses long in ruins. Rents are exceedingly low, less than half a fair interest on the cost of the buildings alone—while the vacant lots cannot be said to have any market value, there being no sales. There are several fine houses yet extant here, but they were all built many years ago, when the island was prosperous, and very few of them are 'in repair.'

" Though Kingston is the principal port of the island, it has but little of the air of a commercial city. One looks and listens in vain for the noise of carts and the bustle of busy men; no one seems to be in a hurry, but few are doing anything, while the mass of the population are lounging about in idleness and rags."

Lord Stanley (p. 5) says :

" I have, myself, no interest in the West Indies beyond that which is common to every Englishman. It was with no party view that I sought to ascertain their actual condition; and having gone out open to conviction, and returned convinced, I proceed to lay before you, as briefly as I can, the result of an experience, limited indeed, but I believe not influenced to any considerable degree, either by personal feeling or political connection.

" I visited the colonies of Jamaica, Guiana and Trinidad, in the course of last autumn; and though not unprepared by general report to find the inhabitants of those countries in a state of considerable distress, I had, in common with most men who take their opinions from the evidence of newspapers or Parliamentary Blue Books, very much underrated the nature and amount of their sufferings. That in the statement which I now submit to you, I have not exceeded the truth, I can faithfully affirm; my only fear is, that while in England I shall be accused of the usual exaggeration of travellers, those who, to their misfortune, may possess a practical experience on the subject, will complain of a picture so imperfectly and feebly coloured.

" To begin with British Guiana. I may perhaps be allowed to call your attention to an extract from the following despatch, addressed to His Excellency Governor Barkly by Lord Grey, in the summer of 1849. I quote it, premising only that, as you well know, Mr. Barkly was, in 1846, an advocate of unrestricted imports in sugar, and that his testimony is therefore doubly valuable, as being that of a political opponent. As his despatch, being written in the same strain, is in fact echoed in the reply, I do not think it necessary to give it at length.

"It is, indeed, most melancholy to learn, that while the difficulties of the planters have continued, since the abolition of slavery, to become more and more severe, until now their ruin appears to be almost complete, and the depreciation of property once of such great value, has reached a point which has involved in the deepest distress great numbers of persons both in this country and in the colony.

"At the same time, the negroes, instead of having made a great advance in civilization, as might have been hoped, during the fifteen years which have elapsed since their emancipation, have, on the contrary, rather retrograded than improved; and that they are now, as a body, less amenable than they were when that great change took place, to the restraints of religion and of law—less docile and tractable, and almost as ignorant, and as much subject as ever to the degrading superstitions which their fathers brought with them from Africa."

"As to the existence of distress, however, this evidence is conclusive, and if further proof be needed, it may be found in the following extracts, from addresses presented to the Governor on the occasion of his visiting Berbice. They are taken from the Berbice Gazette of Oct. 15, 1849 :

"We would particularly draw your Excellency's attention to the condition of the Courantyne Coast, the West Bank of the Canje Creek, and both banks of the River Berbice, and we would pray your Excellency to compare it with the condition in which you found them on your first visit to this country a few years ago.

"At that time your Excellency found magnificent estates, independent and wealthy proprietors, a thriving class of European subordinate officers, and a peasantry, beyond all comparison, the most happy and prosperous in the world. Now in every direction your Excellency will only encounter impoverished proprietors; you will find the introduction of intelligent European servants discontinued, the peasantry relapsing with astonishing and most alarming rapidity into a state of greater barbarism than at any former period, and innumerable fine buildings and costly machinery falling rapidly into dilapidation and decay, and approachable only by water communication, the roads and thoroughfares being quite impassable.

"That this is no over-drawn picture your Excellency will have but too fatally conclusive proof, but it may well be inferred from the fact that since that time three cotton, thirty coffee, and nine sugar estates in this county alone have been totally abandoned, and are now relapsing into a wilderness."

"In addition to the above, I may subjoin the following communication, forwarded to me by a gentleman lately returned from Guiana :

"The La Grange and Windsor Forest estates were bought by

Mr. Cruikshank for £25,000 and £40,000, in 1838 and 1840 respectively. The two were sold together, a few weeks ago, for £11,000 nominally ; but this price included a claim for £5,000 due to the purchaser, making the actual purchase money £6,000, or something less than one tenth of their original value.'

"Shewing a fall in aggregate value of something like 90 per cent ! Will any one say after this, that the statements which reach them of colonial distress are exaggerated or over-coloured ? Take now the description given by a member of the Court of Policy, Mr. White, himself a planter, addressing the Combined Court in presence of the Governor : and let it be noticed that the accuracy of his assertion appears no where to have been disputed in the subsequent debate.

"To shew how property in this country had depreciated in value within the last few years, it appeared to be necessary only to compare the present value of that property with what it brought a few years ago. The value of fixed property—sugar estates—before emancipation, was estimated at twenty millions of pounds sterling, or twice the value of the slaves, as they were appraised by the Commissioners. But what was the value of that same property now ? There were still 220 estates in the colony. If the sales which had taken place within the last year were to be taken as a criterion of the present value of property—and he thought they could very properly be taken as a criterion—it would be found that the average value of estates did not exceed £3,000. It was only the other day that two large estates which, within his recollection, a few years ago would have brought £40,000, were sold for £3,000 each. Therefore, taking £3,000 as the average value of estates, the real value of estates here, including cotton and coffee estates, was £660,000 ; that was to say, property which some years ago would have brought twenty millions sterling, had been, in consequence of the measures of the British Government, reduced in value to £660,000. That shewed the utter annihilation which had taken place in the value of all property in the colony. There was another point which would also shew the great depreciation which had taken place in the value of property. In the petition to which he had already referred, it was stated that the gross annual value of produce of the colony in 1846, was 3,500,000 dollars, or £700,000 sterling. Now, he believed he had shewn the value of all landed property in the country, taking the value of the estates to be £3,000, was £660,000. That was, the value of the sugar estates in the colony was only £660,000, while the produce of a year was £700,000. In fact, the landed property in this country was not worth one year's purchase !"

He further adds :

"In regard of the existence of distress, it may appear idle to add further confirmation of what is already so abundantly proved ; but I cannot refrain from stating briefly the result of my own observations on the road between Georgetown, Demerara and New Amsterdam, Berbice, a line of country which, as you know, comprises all the most productive and cultivated parts of the colony of Guiana. After passing through four or five miles of land, still partially cleared, we entered a tract which bore little appearance of being in any way reclaimed from its primeval state of forest. The road was a mere foot-track, barely passable for carriages of the lightest description—a circumstance which I name on the following account. By the colonial laws, as you are doubtless aware, every proprietor is bound to keep in repair so much of the public highway as passes through his own estate ; failing to do this he is liable to fine, and if the fine remain unpaid the land is chargeable with the debt, and may ultimately be forfeited. Notwithstanding this supposed provision for enforcing the act, not an attempt had been made to comply with its terms ; every single proprietor appeared equally in default, and on my naturally asking the reason of a seeming neglect on the part of the authorities, I was assured that the nominal owners of the estates through which we were passing had declined to incur any expense for properties which paid them nothing, and had thereby left it optional with the local government to reimburse themselves—if they could—by taking possession at once. It is needless to add, that what one party did not think worth retaining, the other did not think worth taking.

"I was prepared for desolation, but not for what I saw. The whole road was lined with the ruins of houses and mills gone to decay ; not old ruins, made so by the lapse of time, but new and spacious dwellings deserted and overgrown with the dense vegetation of the tropics, sometimes wholly unroofed, and admitting the rain and sun, at others preserved from absolute dilapidation by the unauthorized occupation of a negro family, whom I more than once saw using the ornamented woodwork of the walls as fuel to boil their pots ;—the owner having meantime abandoned all care of his property, after perhaps an attempt to remove some of the more valuable machinery of the mills. In many instances, the difficulty and expense of procuring labour, had induced him to relinquish even this ; and costly engines, coppers, vacuum-chests, and all the elaborate apparatus of a boiling-house of the first class, had been left to rust among broken walls, rafters fallen in, and rooms tenanted only by owls and bats."

He further says :

"From Trinidad I turn to Jamaica—the first in actual importance of the West Indian colonies, though inferior as far as the cultivation

of the cane is concerned, both in soil, climate, and facilities of transport. In that island a meeting has lately been held for the purpose of consulting on the best means of raising its inhabitants from their present deplorable condition. You will, perhaps, refuse to admit as literally accurate the expressions employed by a speaker addressing a public meeting : but the fact of a meeting having been convened for the purpose of providing a remedy for the public distress, is in itself an argument that such distress exists : and it will not fail to suggest itself to you, that a resident proprietor speaking to his own immediate neighbours, on matters in which all present are equally interested, and with which all are equally acquainted, cannot without the certainty of detection, indulge in misrepresentation of facts : even did not the known character of Mr. Hosack, one of the most skilful and experienced planters in the colony, put any such supposition in his case wholly out of the question.

“ ‘Our position is much worse than that of the British farmer, and totally different. It is enough to state that out of from *forty* to *fifty* sugar and coffee estates in St. George, I could name about *six only* which are going on vigorously at this moment, and those, too, mainly with the help of captured Africans ; *whilst by far the largest number are totally abandoned, with buildings in ruin, and fields in jungle.*’ ”

“ St. George’s, I may remark in passing, is in Jamaica what Norfolk or Suffolk are in England—the most carefully farmed, and, until of late years, the most productive district of the island. But St. George’s does not stand alone.

“ Next to St. George’s in point of cultivation, and considerably exceeding it in size, is the parish of Trelawney, larger by six acres than the Island of Barbadoes, and cleared throughout almost its whole extent. I have before me a list of the estates in Trelawney, including in all eighty-six ; of these forty-one only, or something less than one-half, have remained in the same hands since 1844, seventeen have been utterly abandoned and gone to ruin ; seventeen others have been sold, many, to my knowledge, at little more than one or two years purchase of their value previous to emancipation ; and eleven are leased, principally to negroes, by whom of course they are only cultivated for the purpose of supplying the market with yams, plantains, and such other fruits as cost little or no labour to raise. Nor is this by any means an extraordinary, or even an unfavourable sample of the general state of affairs throughout the colony, since much of the land in Trelawney is used for pasture, and thus remains to a certain extent productive ; and the pimento, which grows there luxuriantly, (as it does along the whole line of the northern coast,) has not yet attracted the notice of the Cuban proprietors.”

He says :

" With this remarkable admission I close so much of the case as goes to prove the nature and degree of the existing distress, adding only a fact which fell within my own observation. In passing through the parish of St. Ann's, and happeniug to converse with a resident on the subject of the property through which we were at the moment ridiug, I was assured by him that it contained 800 acres—was in great part cleared—was subject to no encumbrances—and was then in the market for the sum of £60 ! Though prepared to believe much, this statement was beyond my credulity : and it was not until, some three weeks later, I was told by a friend, who had accompanied me at the time, that he had actually become the purchaser at the stipulated price, that I could imagine what I had heard to be any thing more than a fiction."

Lord Stanley then describes the condition of the other islands, and shows that if their condition is not quite as deplorable as that of the preceding ones, yet they are any thing else than prosperous, and have retrograded to an alarming extent.

Such is the testimony afforded by these writers of the condition of these islands, in regard to all that may be considered as the material elements of civilization and prosperity.

Nor is the evidence afforded by them in reference to all that may be considered as the moral elements of political power, position, and improvement, of a different character.

Mr. Bigelow, in addition to what has been already quoted from him on this point, says (p. 77)—"I could not perceive that sixteen years of freedom had advanced the dignity of labour or of the labouring classes one particle." "The operative occupies a decidedly lower social position in Jamaica now than he does in South-Carolina."

Lord Stanley says :

" In the first place, has the negro, after seventeen years of partial, and thirteen of entire freedom, advanced or retrograded in the social scale ? I do not ask whether his physical condition be better than it was, because it is evidently optional with him to make it so if he wil : and in respect of the mere necessaries of life (among which clothing in a tropical climate is hardly to be reckoned), he suffered no hardship, even in the days of slavery. But is he better taught—more intelligent—more anxious to raise himself in the world—more alive to the advantages of a civilized, over a savage existence ? Let

the Guiana Commissioners answer (we will begin with that colony). In one part of their report, a district is described as containing eleven villages, four hamlets, twenty-two detached freeholds, making in all a total of 1521 houses, and 6678 souls, forming a labouring population, now, as they phrase it, "led away by the temptations of an idle life"—in other words, doing nothing at all. In the next page we find certain "villagers on the coast" referred to, their numbers being 4677 people, who "rove from plantation to plantation in the most unsettled manner." Not far off is an estate, having on the pay list no less than 893 labourers occasionally employed. With this number only 3515 tasks were obtained, on an average, per month; proving that each man worked rather less than four days in that time, or about once a week. A 'task,' it should be noticed, is at the very outside six hours' work: and a negro when seized, as sometimes befalls him, with a temporary fit of industry, has often been known to perform two of these within the twenty-four hours. A little farther on the Commissioners discover 5000 settlers, 'wholly withdrawn from field labour': and a few miles higher up the river Demerara, we come to 'a dense and over-crowded population, whose labour is almost useless to the community.' I extract a few more passages to the same effect. 'Five villages, and several detached hamlets, contain a population of upwards of 1500 people, pursuing the same idle and unprofitable mode of life as the great majority of their fellow-freeholders throughout the colony.' 'Between Leguan and Wakenaam there are upwards of 2000 people living in villages, for whom the abandoned cane-pieces afford excellent hunting-grounds, and the surrounding waters, abounding in fish, an easy means of subsistence.' Again, on the Essequibo coast, 'about one-fourth work at a time on the neighbouring estates, while the other three-fourths sit down, fish, hunt, and steal, both from the estates and from one another.' In the district between the Iterbissi and the Capoey creeks, 'the number of villagers amounts to more than 4000 people: but so little work is performed by them, that they can hardly be said to make any impression upon the labour-market of the colony.' On the Arabian coast 'some cultivate their own provision-grounds, and thereby obtain partial support, which they eke out by fishing and thieving: others go occasionally to the Essequibo coast, work for a month or two, then return and sit down in almost total idleness. Their working upon plantations on the coast is only when sheer necessity impels them. The young people are growing up in a state most dangerous to social order and the well-being of society.' From the depredations here spoken of, there is little to be feared, since there will soon be nothing left for them to steal: but the moral condition above described is well worthy of remark." * * * "These people seem fast retrograding into a savage state, consistent with the wilderness which is growing up around

them. So much for particular localities : now take a general description, as given in the same document from which I have quoted so largely. It is too long for insertion ; but the summary is as follows :—

COUNTY.	Creoles resident on Estates.	Creoles non-re- sident.	Africans.	Portu- guese.	Coolies.	Totals.
Demerara, -	9,259	26,067	2,222	3,854	3,510	43,912
Essequibo, -	8,432	5,482	9,191	1,164	3,843	20,062
Berbice, -	2,248	12,255	2,407	188	1,057	18,156
Total,	19,339	42,775	5,820	5,506	8,410	82,130

" From the preceding table it appears, that out of a rural population of 82,000 and upwards, more than half (42,000) are utterly unproductive as regards the exportable staples of the colony. Of the remaining 40,000 (I write in round numbers), about the same proportion, one-half, are mere temporary immigrants, attracted half across the globe by that rate of wages which offers no stimulus to native indolence. Hence not 20,000 are left as permanent agricultural labourers.

" But, it may be said, if they do not work on estates, it is because they cultivate on their own account. How do the Commissioners solve this doubt ? ' They (the squatters) carry on a small trade in firewood, charcoal, &c., but by far the greater part of their time is spent in absolute idleness.' A few have bought large estates (abandoned by the owners) in common, and built villages upon them ; a larger proportion have settled without license, or payment of any kind, on Crown lands. They live on game and fish, with the aid of a few ground provisions ; and the demoralization that prevails in many of those isolated communities 'is calculated to excite the deepest alarm.' The little luxuries in food and dress, for which the Creole in former years was willing to work, and the harmless vanity of indulging in which was wisely encouraged as an incentive to exertion, have now ceased to attract. Their life is the life of savages—shunning the face of the white man, ever seeking to escape farther into the primeval forest, and casting off alike the restraints and the decencies of civilization. Well supplied as is British Guiana with churches and schools, neither one nor the other are attended by more than a small proportion of the children now growing up. The average attendance at Sunday schools amount to 5,993 ; at day schools, 3,863 ; while the total number of children is 26,105 : making it appear that for one child which receives religious education, four at least receive none ; and for one receiving secular education, more than five receive none. It is needless to add that instruction

at home is never thought of. All these details I have both condensed and softened down from the picture presented by the Report; and so far as my own personal observation in 1849 extended, I am ready to confirm its general truth.

"If, in retiring from the neighbourhood of the sugar estates, the intention of the negro were to turn cultivator on his own account, he might find ample opportunity of enriching himself by doing so. Incredibly as it seems in a country so amply supplied with every requisite for cultivation as Guiana, it is nevertheless a fact, that from the United States of America a large importation of provisions takes place yearly into that colony. Nay, though a moderate duty is imposed on all such imports, thereby supplying a 'protection to native industry,' which, under the circumstances, appears wholly unnecessary, even this artificial encouragement has done nothing to induce the Creole to exert himself in supplying the market which lies at his very door. I cannot conceive a more complete refutation than is supplied by this single fact to the charge so often renewed in various forms 'that the planters are to blame for not turning their attention to the growth of other articles besides sugar.' Why, it is asked, if they cannot export at a profit, should they not at least supply themselves? The reply is found in the circumstance just alluded to. *Labour is not to be had, for any purpose, upon any terms.* If the Creole will not dig his own ground for the purpose of selling the produce in the neighbouring town—*à fortiori*, he will not dig anybody else's, allowing that other person a share in the profits. The fault is a grave one: but let it rest on the right shoulders, and let not the unfortunate landowner be made answerable for what he has all the will, but not the power to prevent."

Lord Stanley again says:

"With these observations I leave the case of Guiana. Trinidad, I believe, presents a somewhat similar picture, though, perhaps, less strongly coloured.

"Barbadoes contains about 500 sugar estates of different descriptions and sizes, and the black and coloured population is variously computed at from 110,000 to 115,000. Of these the coloured do comparatively little field work,—a rule which holds good throughout the West Indies. With respect to the proportion which the number of labourers upon estates bears to the whole, there appears to exist some difference of opinion. One correspondent estimates it as high as 46,000, qualifying his statement, however, with the remark that 'they do not work above two and a half days in the week on an average, and there are never more than 23,000 at work at any one time:' another gives 33,000 as the total, adding that 'nothing like that number are at work together, save in the crop-time;' a third states as the result of his calculations a similar number, accom-

panied with a similar reservation ; while 23,000, 20,000, and from 20,000 to 18,000, are the respective answers of the rest. If these latter numbers be taken as intended to state the total of those labouring *at one time*, the apparent discrepancies vanish, and we have, in the most densely peopled and least distressed of the West Indian colonies, just one-fifth of the negro population employed in the production of sugar. The rest, doubtless, do something, since they have here no opportunity, as in Guiana, to wander off into the wilderness and resume the savage habits of their African ancestors ; but even under these circumstances the innate propensity to indolence is discernible. Compelled by the non-existence of unoccupied land to purchase before they settle, they will readily work for a time, and even evince considerable industry ; but the small holding once acquired, and labour being no longer necessary, they thenceforward content themselves with the minimum of necessary exertion, taking no step, and making no effort, to rise out of their condition of contented poverty. That the difference between them and their neighbours in the other colonies arises rather from position than character, is evinced by the two following facts. First, wages in Guiana are shewn to be just double what they are in Barbadoes : the one colony is over-crowded, the other wants nothing so much as immigration : between the two there is kept up a constant communication, and every Barbarian knows that by migrating to a distance of not more than 400 or 500 miles he may obtain for one day's work as much as two bring him in when at home ; yet no permanent transfer of population has ever taken place, and the few who have left the island, commonly return to it again before long. Political economy takes no account of such feelings and prejudices ; but they exist, and exercise upon commerce an influence which it is impossible to overlook. Again, assuming as accurate the statement that only one man out of five in Barbadoes is regularly employed on the estates, what becomes of the labour of the rest ? They raise provisions for their own subsistence, no doubt ; for failing in this, they must starve ; and there may possibly remain over and above what is required for home consumption a surplus, which being sold in the Bridgetown market, brings them in a return sufficient to purchase clothing and to pay their taxes ; but this can be done by easy labour of one or two days in the week ; and the rest of their time is passed in absolute idleness and vacancy. There is (except in rare instances) no saving—no laying-by for the future—no attempt to enlarge the sphere of cultivation—in one word, neither activity nor ambition. Should these assertions be doubted, the proof is easy to give. What article is raised for export by negro industry ? The sugar production of Barbadoes is exclusively the work of the African race—that is, of the one-fifth part of the total black and coloured population who hire themselves as labourers. What do the rest—the remain-

ing four-fifths—the farmers and cultivators on their own account—produce? Not sugar—they hardly own a plantation; and yet sugar is the principal, I had almost said, the only important article exported from Barbadoes. There cannot be clearer evidence as to the real habits of the Barbarian negro. He is not a pauper—he is not a beggar—he will work rather than starve or steal; but the idea of enriching himself and his family, of rising to a rank above that in which he was born, very seldom crosses his mind. In England, where so few among our poorer class have the power to better themselves, nearly all have the desire: in the West Indies the exact reverse is the case."

He adds:

"Passing on to Jamaica, I am enabled to lay before you some details relative to the employment of the population in that island, the accuracy of which I see no reason to doubt. You are aware that by the census of 1844, the total population was returned at something less than 380,000 persons. Of these about 16,000 were white, 68,000 coloured, or of mixed blood, the rest full-blooded negroes. Setting on one side the immigration which has taken place between Emancipation and the end of 1849, (amounting to 14,519 souls,) and on the other the irregular and wandering habits, the carelessness of the sick, and indifference to medical aid both as regards themselves and others, which forms so peculiar a feature in the Creole character, it is generally estimated that the increase of the last few years has not been considerable. Assuming a black population of something less than 300,000, we have, as the result of their labour upon the estates, a sugar crop of 27,000 tons. This, according to the usual computation of West Indian free labour, requires for its production 13,500 hands constantly employed,—rather less than the number of immigrants as given above.

"But supposing each man only to work, on an average, three, or two and a half days in the week, we should still have a total of not more than 27,000 hired labourers, or one-tenth of the whole black population. What, you will ask, do the rest do? I should be at a loss to answer this question otherwise than by pointing out what they do not do. They raise no sugar, and very little coffee; a few pimento walks (which require no laborious cultivation) may possibly belong to them here and there; and they supply the markets of the island with yams, plantains, and other provisions, although even in this respect the estates are generally self-supporting. Add the number employed as household servants—at the outside 25,000—(shop-keeping and urban occupations are almost entirely carried on by the coloured or mixed race)—let it further be remembered, that the amount of exportable articles produced by the industry of negroes working for themselves, is absolutely inappreciable in comparison

with the total of Jamaica exports, even reduced as these have been of late years—and we have a fair measure of the application and energy of the emancipated negro. I am certainly within compass when I say that the labour of 50,000 persons steadily applied would accomplish all that is actually done by something less than 300,000. Indeed, when the census of 1844 was taken, not fewer than 142,000 negroes were returned as *professedly* without occupation or pursuit. How many more might have been included within the meaning, if not the letter, of this return, you will be well able to judge. I may add, that according to an opinion very prevalent among the planters, the tendency to withdraw from the estates, and form native villages, in which nothing is produced, and the neighbourhood of white men carefully avoided, is rather increasing than diminishing."

Speaking of the reports of the missionaries to these islands, he adds :

" And they go on to observe that the old African superstitions of Obeahism and Miallism are again gaining ground ; that marriage is more rarely contracted, and that habits of intemperance prevail. I need not go further into detail, but nearly all the missionary reports coincide in the same general descriptions ; and living as they do among the people, and having in their favour all the popularity which their assistance in the struggle for emancipation formerly gave them, they are well qualified to judge. The planters, both in private and public, have repeatedly confirmed these statements ; but it is not the fashion of the day to give *them* credit either for common understanding or common honesty."

These extracts, which we have made at some risk of being tedious to our readers, we think establish conclusively that the present condition of things in these islands forms a striking contrast to the picture of abounding wealth, pervading industry, and pleasant life, which they exhibited prior to the act of emancipation. The results have been as deplorable as the expectations were sanguine and brilliant. Poverty and ruin have usurped the places of wealth and prosperity, indolence and vice of virtuous industry and well regulated labour. The number of crimes has increased, and all social improvement gone forever ; the great staples of their commerce have been diminished by half, and all enterprise dead, " while the finest land in the world may be had almost for the asking."

Nor has any change taken place, except for the worse, since these works were written. In the June number of Blackwood's

Magazine, we have a review of a recent work by M^r Day, D.P., entitled "Five Years in the West Indies," which contains the facts stated by Mr. Bigelow and Lord Stanley. We extract:

"The first West Indian Island visited by Mr. Day does. Trinidad was the one on which he appears to have made the longest stay, and to which he has devoted the greatest number of chapters. The general impression left upon the reader's mind by his work is most unfavourable to the West Indies as a residence. Three disagreeables he particularly indicates, namely—the odious character and growing insolence of the blacks; the lax morality and disreputable tone of white society, and the incessant annoyance and danger resulting from venomous insects and reptiles. As regards the first point, we must either wholly discredit Mr. Day's book, and set it down as a mere malicious fabrication, or we must agree with him that negroes are only fit for servitude, and that it was a mistaken philanthropy that ever admitted them to equality of privileges with civilized men, and to the enjoyment of a liberty which with them is only another word for idleness, license and depravity. 'Once for all,' he says, 'I disclaim any party. I am neither an emancipationist nor an upholder of slavery. I have no interest in the matter either way; but, from observation, I feel assured that for negroes a *restricted* freedom is necessary, for they have not the judgment to conduct themselves properly, as white freemen would do, nor are they, in consequence, entitled to the same privileges.' And again: 'All that is here written is the result of unbiased observation, as the author is of no party, although rejecting the Utopian absurdities of Exeter Hall. No one can judge of negroes but those who have lived amongst them.' * * * * He begins at Barbadoes. There, owing to the large coloured population—four to one of the whites—the free-labour system works better than in most of the other islands; and this is especially the case in Bridgetown, the capital. In the country districts, the negro will not work more than four days a-week—at a shilling a-day, for nine hours' work. This, however, is wonderful industry compared to what occurs elsewhere. To see the emancipated negro in all the glory of his independence, insolence and idleness, we must pass on to Trinidad, and take a leaf from Mr. Day's ninth chapter:

"To any one who could labour with his own hands in the broiling sun, uncleared land in Trinidad is cheap, and 'lots' are advertised to be sold as low even as fifteen dollars (three pounds); but if a gentleman were to take a piece of land, to be dependent on the labour of others to improve it, he would find it dear enough, labour of all sorts being so high. Field labourers, even Coolies, get four bits (one shilling and eightpence) a-day, whilst artisans and

street labourers are paid in proportion, when you can get them so far to favour you as to work at all. More than once have I heard a carman say to his employer, since no labourer of this class will receive weekly or monthly wages, 'Massa, I no work for you no more to day!' and have watched the poor employer *soliciting* the independent negro in this style, 'Come, now, my good fellow, you *must* take another turn or two; remember how many dollars you have already received from me to-day. Come, there's a good fellow, *do*.' 'Well, den, massa, if I do, you mos pay me higher?' With these consequences staring him in the face, he must be a bold man indeed who would take unimproved land in Trinidad. 'Here,' said a lady to me, 'it is the white who is the slave to the black;' and so it was. I put the above conversation down verbatim as I heard it on one occasion, but it was often repeated in substance by others."

"The planters make dire complaints of the ruinous consequences of admitting slave-grown sugar into England at the same duty as that of the British colonial. The high wages of the negroes, and their utter independence of labour for any but themselves, with their laziness and insolence, render it utterly impossible in the majority of the planters to cover their expenses; and they fail of turning their estates into provision grounds. Indeed, the last *coup* to the ruin of the planters seems to have been given by the mad colonial policy of the mother country.

"The *dolce far niente* of Naples is prompt activity compared with the indolence of the negroes. I never witnessed elsewhere anything like it; indeed, it is incomprehensible to all who have not been in the West Indies. Strapping negro wenches, thrice as strong as any European female, will scarcely take the trouble to move, except to receive money. 'How you think I can do dis? what you tink I made of?' 'No matter,' said Dr. —— to me, 'how much prejudiced a person may come out in favour of the negroes, or may have believed them to have been wronged, or to be capable of improvement; no sooner does he see the innate brutality of their nature, and their fiendish, malignant, vindictive disposition, than he changes his tone for one of utter disgust.' Horses and other animals dread them, so do even their own children, on all of whom, if offended by others, they will wreak their vengeance; and once beginning, they never know when to leave off."

We shall now proceed to show that this deplorable condition of things in the British West India Islands is the legitimate result of the so much lauded act of emancipation, and then enter into an examination of the causes assigned for it by Mr. Bigelow, as he may be considered as the representative of a class of men in this country, who maintain the same views on the subject of slavery, and advance

*S
views pt.
slavery*

the same apologies for the failure of the experiment in these islands. The ruinous condition of things which followed the act of emancipation, we maintain was its natural result, and only such as might have been reasonably anticipated from a due appreciation of the negro character, and the circumstances of the case.

The history of events as they transpired bears a marked significance upon this point, and goes far to show what were the immediate and obvious effects of the act. Immediately upon its passage, a great and unprecedented depreciation of every kind of property followed. Real estate deteriorated to the amount of 80,000,000 of pounds, and a loss was sustained of more than half the value of property ~~invested~~ interested in slaves or labour. "The commissioners, says Lord Stanley, (p. 25,) who were sent out to estimate the property about to be confiscated, returned its value at 43,000,000 of pounds. But this was not all. It was well known that of the fixed capital invested in buildings, machinery, improvements of land, etc., a greater part would be rendered wholly unprofitable, while none would retain its former value. The amount of capital so depreciated has generally been stated at not less than 80,000,000 of pounds; and looking at the incomes derived from West India estates, there seems no reason to suppose the calculation erroneous. For the loss incurred on this enormous investment no compensation was proposed." Universal financial embarrassments followed, as a matter of course, this great depreciation and loss of property, and they in turn increased and intensified the distrust and alarm that necessarily grew out of the great change which had been so suddenly wrought in the social, civil and economical condition of the Islands, until all enterprise seemed paralyzed and confidence lost. Those proprietors who were largely in debt, or in at all embarrassed circumstances, were compelled forthwith to sell. The desire to sell West India property soon became epidemic, whilst on the other hand a reluctance to the ownership of that kind of property soon showed itself and acquired strength with the lapse of each day; and, in consequence, all the evils of panic and forced sales were realized. This state of feeling, beginning in the Islands, was not long in reaching London. The mortgagees of West India property there soon took the alarm, and in their anxiety to save themselves from entire loss, contributed in no small degree to aggravate the general ruin. Each

year as it developed further derangement in the social and political system of the Islands, greater absence of industry among the blacks, greater difficulty in the procuration of labour and greater decrease in the amount of products, served only to establish and permanently fix the work of ruin.

Now, we contend that these deplorable results which followed so closely upon the heels of the emancipation act, and in the close connexion of cause and effect, were its certain consequences, and what, in the nature of things, might have been reasonably anticipated.

The West India Islands presented at the time of the passage of the act of emancipation, that peculiar, social and political condition, which forms so prominent a feature in the civilization of the Southern States—the peaceful occupation and habitation of the same country by two distinct and different races, the white and black. The white race was possessed of all the intelligence and all the capital. They owned the lands, and owning the negroes, owned also the labour which worked them. Thus capital and labour were under the control of the same head, and harmonized perfectly with each other, and that happy condition of things was attained in which all the difficulties growing out of their antagonism were avoided. And this arrangement was the more happy, as it was the more necessary where nature had stamped the character of agricultural upon the labour of the country, and where population was so sparse in proportion to its extent. The two races were happy in the enjoyment of their respective positions—the white holding that of superior intelligence and power—the black that of useful labour and peaceful and continued industry. Each seemed to have taken the place for which God and nature had destined it, and both in a happy co-operation about to work the destiny of a high civilization. We shall hereafter show how this happy condition of things was over turned by the emancipation act, and in place of that harmony which once existed, new and hostile relations were established between capital and labour.

The position of inferiority and subordination which the African race occupied in the West India Islands, and which it now occupies in the Southern States, we believe to be the one in which it will soonest and best reach that lower degree of civilization of which it

seems only capable. Whatever differences there may exist as to the abstract and scientific question of the unity of the races, there can be no doubt as to the historical fact of the inferiority of the African race, and the fact of its peculiar physical organization or constitution.

There stands Africa, the same to-day as she was thousands of years ago—the land of mysterious darkness and untameable barbarism. And by Africa, we mean Ethiopia proper, for in Egypt and the more northern sections of the continent, a civilization, equal to the highest forms of that ever reached in the East, had been attained at an early period, and has been to a greater or less degree kept up to the present time, but by races of men of distinctive Eastern or Moorish character. In all the course of time, she has founded no empire, she has reared no cities—she has established no polity—she has constructed no language—she has left no history. Where are her achievements in commerce, or art, or literature? She has built no ship—she has reared no monument—she has left no record of her doings, or her thoughts or aspirations. Her existence, as far as the rest of the world is concerned, is as though she had never been. All the other great races or varieties of man, from the borders of the China sea to the waters of our own stormy Atlantic, have done some great things, or left some records of their distinctive character on the great walls of time. They have founded dynasties—they have marched armies—they have built navies—they have written works, and they have constructed governments. The African race seems to have stood still, and only to have emerged from its profound barbarism and ignorance when brought in contact with and under subjection to the white.

The great fact of its history points it out as a race of decided inferiority, and one wholly incapable of achieving for itself any high or useful and independent destiny.

To have expected, therefore, that a race of people with such a character and history—a people over whom the vis-inertiae of life seems to have complete sway, and whose natural disposition is to avoid all manner of effort or action, would have been capable of appreciating the position of freedom in which it was placed by the act of emancipation, and of working out the destiny of a high civilization, was hoping against all reason, and in the face of all experi-

ence. The truth is, that owing to its natural inferiority, the negro race is incapable of attaining the same high degree of civilization which belongs to the white, and can only be made to reach that lower grade of which it is capable by that process known as slavery in the Southern States. The mistake of the English government (and the mistake of our Northern abolitionists is the same) was, in supposing this race of people to be possessed of the same character, subject to the same influences, animated by the same motives, and capable of the same self-improvement and civilization as the white. And when it undertook, therefore, to disturb that peculiar condition of things which existed in the West India Islands prior to the act of emancipation, it did the very worst thing for the future welfare of the negro race, as well as causing the entire destruction of the prosperity of these Islands. It removed the wholesome restraints of a civilization which had been imposed by the whites—took from it the only efficient stimulus to effort, that of compulsion, and left it abandoned to all its natural impulses and habits of idleness, soon to relapse into a condition of complete degradation.

The practical operation of the act was in its disastrous results such as might be reasonably anticipated from a due appreciation of the above considerations.

In the first place, instead of that harmony and perfect co-operation which had once existed between them, it established new and hostile relations between capital and labour—between those who owned the soil and those who were to work it. The quondam slaves were unwilling to perform as much and continuous labour as they had done under the system of slavery, and charged high wages for what they consented to do. And the complaint soon became general, that a sufficient quantity of effective labour could not be hired, and that the price of that which could be, was too high for any profitable employment of it. This evil was so severely felt that the English government made an attempt to introduce the Cooly system, which was intended to remedy it by increasing the quantity of labour and thus depreciating its cost. The remedy, however, failed. And the reluctance of the negro population, on the one hand, to perform more labour than was sufficient to supply it with the mere necessities of life, and its disposition, on the other, to demand exorbitant payment for that which it did consent to do, but increas-

with the lapse of time. The consequence was a further depreciation of property, and a more complete prostration of all industrial enterprise. Sales could only be effected at an utter sacrifice, and many splendid estates were sold at mere nominal prices. Others, again, were entirely abandoned. These results are fully substantiated by Mr. Bigelow and Lord Stanley. Nor can it be said, that they are to be accounted for by the fact, that the negro was not the owner of the soil, and therefore had no interest in its permanent improvement, because the same objection would hold good with regard to the agriculture of England, and was absent in the case of St. Domingo with a superior population.

Again, by destroying the compulsory system of labour, and removing the checks and more stringent impositions of slavery, the Emancipation Act gave an opportunity to the negro population for the development of its natural disposition to habits of idleness and indolence, which the bounties of nature in no small degree assisted.

The West India islands, fanned by the gentle breezes of a tropical ocean, delightful in climate, fertile in soil, rich in fruits, and beautiful in flowers, from their earliest discovery, have always been the admiration and delight of all who visited them. But these islands of beauty, pleasantness and plenty, beguiling him, like Calypso, of the great purposes of life with their softening influences, and almost supplying his wants with their spontaneous offerings, are not the best adapted for the perfect development of the higher and nobler qualities of man. Nature, in her abundant provisions for him, leaves him nothing to do, and makes of him only a spoiled child. The barren soil, the rock-bound coast, the wintry sea, are the theatres of his most heroic endeavour and God-like achievement.

Planteau

The negro, naturally indolent and improvident, and caring only for the mere necessaries of life, found them in the West Indies furnished ready to his hand by the bounties of nature, and could not realize the necessity for continued and hard toil. He could not, and he did not, realize the propriety of working the six when he knew the labour of one day was sufficient to supply all *his* wants and to afford him all *his* comforts, and he acted accordingly. He knew little of the demands of commerce and the prosperity which springs out of the exchange of the surplus productions of a country; or if he knew, he cared little for them. The aim of his existence was

not to achieve as much as possible, but as little as possible, and yet live ; because he lacked the higher motives and incentives of a superior race. The habits of slothfulness, idleness and improvidence, grew and strengthened with each year of freedom, until the work of retrogression and demoralization was complete.

That this was actually the result in the West Indies, we have abundant evidence from the works we have so often quoted—in the annual falling off of their exports and decrease of their productions—in the gradual prostration of all industrial enterprise, and in the wide-spread poverty and ruin.

Nor have these results been relieved by any general improvement in the intellectual, moral and social condition of these Islands. On the contrary, their intellectual, moral and social condition, as we have shown, have only kept pace with their material prostration and ruin.

Such are the results of this great experiment, of which such bright anticipations were indulged. The least that can be said of it is, that it has resulted in a failure, entire and unmitigated. In place of their once happy and prosperous and improving condition, it has brought upon these Islands complete and hopeless ruin—ruin to their industrial enterprise—ruin to all the kindly elements of society—ruin to the white man and ruin to the black !

Mr. Bigelow, while he admits these deplorable results, ingeniously contends that they were not caused by the act of Emancipation, but that they were the natural effect of a long system of slavery ; and we propose to devote the remainder of this article to a consideration of the reasons he assigns for them.

He denies that the relation of cause and effect exists in reality between this failure and the act of Emancipation, while he admits that from the date of the act to the present time, the planters of Jamaica have attributed the decline of the islands mainly to that cause.

He attempts to show not only that the process of reasoning which naturally suggests itself, of connecting these consequences with the emancipation act as their cause, is incorrect, but also that the Jamaica planters, whose lives were spent under it, and who witnessed all its practical operations, are utterly mistaken in their views, and are labouring under a gross and extraordinary delusion in reference to a subject of the deepest interest to them. Now, for our own

part, we are disposed to place more reliance upon the opinions of the Jamaica planters than upon the speculations of Mr. Bigelow.

Mr. Bigelow sums up his reasons as follows :

" I have, with all practicable brevity, stated what I look upon as the more prominent causes of the present prostrate condition of this charming island. I take leave to recapitulate them.

First.—The degradation of labour, in consequence of the yet comparatively recent existence of negro slavery, by which the white population are excluded from almost every department of productive industry, and a tone of public opinion is begotten, calculated to discourage rather than to promote industry among the people of colour.

Second.—Nine-tenths of the improved land was owned by absentees—which implies unskilful tillage ; an extra expense on an average of three thousand dollars a year to each estate for attorneys, agents and overseers; great improvidence in the management of the properties, and few or no labour-saving improvements.

Third.—The estates under culture were all mortgaged for more than they were worth, when the emancipation bill passed. That measure increased the embarrassments of the residents, made them the easy prey of their non-resident creditors, and left them without means or capital to conduct the cultivation of the land with profit or even with economy.

Fourth.—The magnitude of the estates and the principles upon which they have been cultivated, prevent the free circulation of real property, tend to accumulate the lands in the hands of a few, to exterminate the middle classes of men with little or no capital, and to beget a constant and unnatural antagonism between capital and labour.

These causes, in my judgment, would have conducted Jamaica to inevitable ruin, had the tariff laws never been altered nor the slaves been set at liberty."

To do full justice to Mr. Bigelow, we shall give the process of reasoning, in his own words, by which he arrives at his conclusions. He says :

" First in importance I reckon the degrading estimate placed upon every species of agricultural labour by the white population. It is well known that the labourer belongs to a proscribed class throughout the British dominions, and that no merit or accomplishment will wipe out the disgrace of such a connexion. That feeling, of course, is very much more inexorable here among the planters, who have been accustomed mainly to slave labour. They would, as a class, sooner beg than hold the plough or ply the hoe. Of course one never sees a white labourer on their estates, and the coloured

people have no competition for wages except with persons of their own complexion. It is unnecessary to add, that such an estimate of labour among the whites has a most pernicious effect upon the blacks. They, with the average sequence of negro logic, infer that if gentlemen never work, they have only to abstain from work to be gentlemen."

Mr. Bigelow's argument abstracted, then, is this: Agricultural labour by the white population in the British dominions is looked upon as degraded—that this feeling is very much exaggerated in the West Indies, where the planters have been accustomed to slave labour; so much so that "they would, as a class, sooner beg than hold the plough or ply the hoe"—that this degraded estimate of agricultural labour by the whites has such pernicious effects upon the blacks, "*that they are disinclined* to labour for others more than is absolutely necessary for their own maintenance, and that they render their services without any alacrity, and without any effort or desire to reward the employer." Are these premises of Mr. Bigelow correct?—for if they are not, then the reasoning founded upon them fails. Is it true that agricultural labour is looked upon as degrading throughout the British dominions, and that this feeling is so exaggerated in the West Indies because of the former existence of slavery, as to have infected the negroes, and to have caused the idleness which he admits is now their prominent characteristic? We think not. We think that agricultural labour, both in England and throughout her dominions, wherever it prevails, is always the preferred labour; and we appeal, in proof of this, to that splendid culture which now makes her soil to flourish with the beauty of a garden. Nor is it true that, because of any prejudice growing out of the former existence of slavery, agricultural labour has come to be considered so degrading in the West Indies "that the white man would sooner beg than hold the plough or ply the hoe." The truth is, that something stronger, something deeper than any natural repugnance slavery might have caused to exist towards that kind of labour, deters him from it. It is because of his peculiar organization, (and we say peculiar only in contrast to that of the African,) he is unable to bear the fierce heat of the Tropical regions in the exposed position of a cultivator of the soil. This great necessity, the necessity of self-preservation, alone prevents him from

putting forth there personally the same grand energies and industry which feed the crowded population of Europe, and which are now levelling the forests of the Great West, and making them to "blossom as the rose." The Englishman, neither at home or abroad, in the county of Middlesex nor in Jamaica, despises that labour which not only enriches but adorns and beautifies his country and his home. The quiet enjoyments of pastoral life find a place in his literature, and furnish a theme for the invocation of his muse. No matter what and where the struggle of a long life of labour to him, the neat cottage with its flowers and vines, its bright pastures and handsome herds—its sunshine and shade, its peaceful labours—forms the pleasantest picture in the prospective of the declining years of a serene old age. And it is not saying too much to say, that her yeomanry has always been the pride as well as the defence of England. Her agriculture has always been to her an object of the deepest interest and pride, and it is but recently that the united voice of all the other branches of industry succeeded in breaking up that unequal and unjust favour which it received from the hands of government.

But we need not multiply these suggestions to expose the error of Mr. Bigelow's assumption, that, because of the existence of slavery and slave labour in any country, the white man there soon looks upon the agriculture in which it is usually employed as degraded and degrading; for, in the Southern States, we have a complete practical denial of his whole theory and ingenious reasoning. In those sections of our country, where the climate and the nature of the soil admit of it, the white man and the negro, the master and the slave, may be constantly seen driving the "same team afield," or contending with the plough in matches of skill; and no one who has travelled the waters of the low countries, but has seen them both struggling at the same oar to aid the sluggish movements of the raft. Here the two races are to be daily seen peacefully occupying the same country and quietly prosecuting the same labours. Nor does the white man despise that labour in which the negro is his assistant or in which he is mostly engaged.

If Mr. Bigelow means to say that the European or Englishman in the West Indies prefers to employ the labour of negroes, or of others, in the pursuit of agriculture, to working with his own hands,

he asserts a truism to which all must agree. It is in accordance with a universal principle of human nature that man nowhere—either in the workshop or in the field—labours with his own hands, where, by his superior intelligence or position, he is enabled to employ the labour of others. The tiller of the soil, as soon as he is enabled, drops the plough or the hoe, and becomes the owner of the soil—the poor mechanic rises to the dignity of the master workman, and so on, through the whole range of industrial pursuits. This ingenious speculation of Mr. Bigelow, therefore, is of no avail. Nor is it true, as he would have us suppose, that agricultural labour fell into such disrepute in the West Indies on account of the former existence of slavery, as to cause an aversion to it both on the part of negroes and whites.

It is true that very many of the Jamaica estates were abandoned or sold by their former owners in consequence of the great depreciation of property which followed the passage of the Act, but then they fell into the hands of those, and at little or no cost, who not only desired, but had every confidence in the success of the experiment of freedom. On the other hand, the negro, true to his nature, worked as he had always worked—that is, he did as little as he could ; under the system of slavery, he had done as little as his master, the white man, would allow him, and under the system of freedom he did as little as his master, the necessity of self-preservation, permitted him to do.

The cause, therefore, of the failure of the experiment, did not arise from any increased reluctance to agricultural labour, growing out of the former existence of slavery, on the side of the white man or of the black ; and Mr. Bigelow must seek for it elsewhere.

The other reasons of Mr. Bigelow we will briefly notice—they are suggested under the terms absenteeism and mortgages.

The first implies “unskilful tillage” and increased and unnecessary expenditures in the management of estates, and the second suggests all the evils which grew out of an encumbered condition of property. These causes, there can be little doubt, operated as auxiliaries, and hastened the work of retrogression and ruin ; but they were only secondary, or grew out of the results of the Act itself. The evils of absenteeism must, in the course of time, remedy themselves by throwing the property into the hands of those who find it their

interest or pleasure to live by it and upon it, and it is the same with those of mortgaged property. They, too, soon work out their own cure. These two classes of proprietors—the absentees and the embarrassed—must be ruined, but the ruin will stop there. They must be sacrificed, but the sacrifice will enrich their successors. Their estates must change hands, but the purchasers get their lands at a great reduction on their original cost, and with all the advantages of improvement. They have, therefore, a fair opportunity for success. This was eminently the case in Jamaica—for many of the estates were entirely abandoned by their owners and others sold at nominal prices, and thus the experiment of freedom was made under the most favourable circumstances.

But these causes did not operate in the West India islands to the extent that Mr. Bigelow's reasoning would lead us to suppose, for it is indisputable that a large portion of the owners of the soil were not absentees, and *that all of the estates were not mortgaged*.

The true cause of all the mischief he cannot, or he will not see. He cannot bring his mind to realize that this whole scheme of philanthropy has been lost upon the negro race, as all such legislative enterprises must result in the nature of things. It would involve too great a sacrifice of his cherished opinions and feelings, to say nothing of the difficulty of abandoning that favourite theory of freedom which, according to him and his brother abolitionists of the North, is to work out the regeneration of the African race in the Southern States of America. Mr. Bigelow forgets that great fact of history, taught by the decline and fall of nations, and the constantly recurring struggles of revolution, that a condition of well-regulated liberty is the most difficult to be obtained, and the most difficult to be preserved; that it is purchased only at the price of ceaseless vigilance and constant individual sacrifice, and requires for its attainment and appreciation a high degree of intellectual and moral cultivation. He forgets that the failure of one people after another to appreciate the blessings which it brings, and to maintain it pure and unsullied, have caused good and great men to doubt even if the white races were capable of its rightful enjoyment, and that the eyes of the thinking portion of mankind are turned towards the land of Washington, with deepening interest and high hope, as each year bears the Republic one step further in the great experiment of free-

dom. And forgetting these, he cannot see what seems to us so plain, that the negro race in the West Indies, with its known character and history, was unfit for the appreciation of that condition of freedom in which it was placed by the Act of Parliament, and that the failure of the experiment was only what might have reasonably been anticipated from the circumstances of the case.

In the present condition of public sentiment, both abroad and in the northern sections of our own country, the results of this experiment are of the greatest importance, as teaching fundamental truth upon the whole subject of negro slavery : and to the South, of vital value, as justifying and confirming the policy she has hitherto maintained, and in future should maintain, in the government of this race. It holds up to view the picture which her condition would present under a similar experiment. She cannot, therefore, be too vigilant or too careful in guarding against all the insidious approaches of abolitionism. With the sentiment of the world against her, with the sentiment of the larger portion of our own country against her, her position is one of peculiar difficulty and danger, and calls for the exercise of the highest statesmanship, wisdom and firmness. The truly skilful and trusty mariner is not he who is best and bravest when the storm has struck the ship and driven her to her beam's-end, but he who has wisely discerned the face of the sky, and, seeing it afar off, has gathered in his sails, and set all in order against its coming. And what the South now needs most for her guidance, is sleepless vigilance to foresee, and prudence and wisdom and statesmanship to provide for the difficulties which lie in her way. At the same time, she should not be unmindful or negligent of the great duties which are imposed upon her by the institution of slavery. If the benefits which this institution confers upon her are great, the duties it imposes are equally so. The South should meet and perform these duties as becomes a humane, generous, chivalrous, intelligent and christian people. If there should be no shrinking on her part, in the assertion and maintenance of her rights, there should be no lacking in the discharge of her duties. Abuses belong to this as to every other institution of man, and the South should labour faithfully to perfect it as much as possible. There are many things permitted to be done under the system of slavery on the Statute Book, which are prevented by public senti-

ment. A humane, enlightened and christian public opinion is the prevailing law in these cases,—yet the South is judged by the strict letter of the Statute Book, and fails to receive any credit for the controlling and wholesome operation of public opinion. We think that the Statute Book should be made to conform to public sentiment, so that we may be judged by what we really are, and by the law which in truth governs us, and not by a standard which does not faithfully reflect the spirit of our people and the practical working of the system, and subjects us frequently to unmerited obloquy. We think that the separation of husband and wife, and of children from their parents at a helpless and tender age, afford illustration of these remarks, and are fit subjects for judicious legislation. Let the law forbid to be done that which public opinion now denies.
